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OUR LIGHTHOUSES.

LIGHTHOUSES as now constructed on the coast of the British Islands should be classed among the marvels of architectural ingenuity. The creation of a structure of this kind is on almost all occasions a severe test of engineering skill and persevering endurance. The difficulties experienced are frequently almost insurmountable; and human industry can have no nobler monuments than the massive piles which stand exposed to the full fury of the winds and waves on the jagged rocks which surround our coasts.

The Eddystone Lighthouse is now being rebuilt; but what could be a grander example of man's skill and enterprise than Smeaton's great work on that rock! Commenced in 1759, and completed in the face of almost superhuman obstacles, it has stood securely in the midst of the Atlantic breakers for more than a hundred years. Of late years it has been frequently surveyed, but was not finally condemned until 1877, when Mr Isaac Douglas of the Trinity House reported that it was not destined to exist much longer. Owing to very considerable tremor, which occurred with each wave-stroke during heavy storms from the westward, fears were then entertained for the safety of the structure, particularly as sea-water had frequently been driven through the joints of the masonry. The upper part had been strengthened in 1839 and 1865 with internal wrought-iron bars, extending from the lantern-floor downwards to the solid portion of the tower. On the last occasion, it was found that the chief mischief arose from the upward strike of the sea at the cornice; but repairs were effected, and further leakage prevented. The tower is still sound; but unfortunately the rock on which the lighthouse is built has been seriously undermined by the sea. The cause of this is said to be chiefly the incessant straining of the rock by the heavy sea-strokes on the tower. It was therefore resolved to erect another lighthouse, of larger dimensions; and a good foundation for this purpose was found to exist about one hundred

and twenty feet off the old site. Among other improvements which were thought to be desirable was the elevation of the light for a range of nineteen nautical miles, so that it might be extended more towards the Channel Rock, and made to overlap the range of the neighbouring Lizard lights to the westward. In the old lighthouse, too, it was found that the sea rose in stormy weather above the top of the lantern, thus often eclipsing the light, and altering its distinctive character. This is a matter of greater importance in the present day than it was at the time of the erection of the structure, from the enormous increase in shipping, and the additional lighthouses which have been established, each having a distinctive character. The power of a light in so important a position as the Eddystone Rock, ought to be of the highest class; and since the capacity of the present tower is insufficient for this purpose, as well as for the provision of a first-class fog-signal, ample considerations existed in favour of a new lighthouse being built. The work is now progressing very favourably in the face of the immense difficulties which must attend such a task in such a place. It has been suggested that Smeaton's building should be re-erected on the mainland, when the time comes for it to be taken down, as doubtless it will be, upon the completion of the new lighthouse. It would not be difficult to find some point on the coast on which the venerable building might be erected, and do good service for another hundred years; while its preservation would be a just and fitting tribute to the memory of the great engineer with whose name it must always be associated.

During the greater part of the time in which it has done such good service, four keepers have been attached to it, three being constantly on the spot, and one on shore. They were relieved from Plymouth by steamer once a month; and the average annual cost of maintaining the lighthouse was about five hundred and eighty-five pounds.

A good example of the dangers incurred by those engaged in the construction of lighthouses, exists in the circumstances under which one, since

completed, was commenced in 1867, on a rock beyond the Isle of Sein, off Cape Finisterre, Brittany. The rock is of hard gneiss, from forty to fifty feet in length, and about twenty-five feet in breadth. The preliminary work was done by fishermen of the Isle of Sein, whose familiarity with those waters enabled them to reach the rock when no one else could do so. The *modus operandi* which these fishermen adopted was as follows: When opportunity offered, two of them, wearing cork belts, got out of their boats, and lay upon the rocks, which they clutched with one hand, while they made holes at intervals of three feet with the other hand. While they were doing this, they were covered with spray, and sometimes they were swept off the rock altogether, and had to be recovered by their boats. In 1867, only eight hours' work could be accomplished upon the rock, and only fifteen holes were made. Next year, forty holes were made. In 1869, the building was commenced. In 1878, the tower was forty feet above the highest tides; and eventually, after more than twelve years had been occupied by its construction, it stood completed ninety feet above them. This is by no means a solitary or singular instance of the hazardous and tedious character of this work. Smeaton's difficulties when building the Eddystone Lighthouse, and Stevenson's when engaged in the construction of that on the Bell Rock, are familiar to nearly all of us, and have been detailed by themselves. Of more modern lighthouses, the most remarkable instances in this respect are the Skerryvore, on the south-west coast of Scotland, and the still more recent construction on the Dhuheartach Rock. In mentioning these cases we are impelled to refer to the services of the Stevenson family. The father, who built the lighthouse on the Bell Rock, had three sons who distinguished themselves in the same line of art. To Alan Stevenson is due the Skerryvore; and to his brothers, Thomas and David Stevenson, who succeeded to his fame, belongs the merit of the construction on Dhuheartach; this last a perfect wonder of engineering, for the rock had not a foot of landing, and operations were carried on with difficulty beyond all ordinary experience. No fewer than two thousand five hundred tons of granite were conveyed from Erraid, a small island south-west of Mull, and ten miles distant, and successfully placed on this almost inaccessible rock. The chief hindrance which attends this work is the difficulty of keeping the foundations of the structure from being carried away by the sea; the winter gales often, as in the case of the Bell Rock Lighthouse, undoing the work of the summer and autumn, and carrying out to sea blocks of stone many tons in weight.

If lighthouse-building requires perseverance and endurance, lighthouse-keeping requires the exercise of the same rare qualities in degrees scarcely less striking. We are essentially a maritime nation; and all those who look after the safety of our seamen, and facilitate the merchant service of the world by rendering navigation on our coasts less perilous, deserve well of us. It is difficult to realise to the full the horrors and the privations which must attend the life of a lighthouse-keeper. In most isolated lighthouses, it has been found strictly necessary

to have three men on the spot at one time, in order to lessen the terrible loneliness of such a situation. Many tales of horror are extant concerning lighthouses. In one well-authenticated instance, one of the keepers went mad during a hurricane and killed his companion; and on another occasion, in the same lighthouse, one of the keepers being drowned, the other, overcome by the horrors of his situation, committed suicide. Happily, however, nowadays occurrences of this kind are exceedingly rare, and the service is filled by intelligent and trustworthy men, who take a pride in their duties and are reconciled to their life. The usual arrangement is for one of them to be on shore for a week or a fortnight at a time; while the others, whether they are two or three, are on duty in the lighthouse; in this way all the keepers have frequent relaxation from the rigour of their life. In most lighthouses, small libraries are now provided, and supplied with books and magazines, which are a most invaluable source of amusement to the keepers when off duty. It would be difficult for any one to find a better or easier way of alleviating the hardships of a most deserving class of men, than to send off parcels of books and papers occasionally to some of these desolate stations, and such kindness would certainly be heartily appreciated.

If those on shore are awed by the terrible violence of the winds and waves during a tempest, what must be the experiences of men who live in a building exposed to the full fury of the heavy ocean breakers! When we look at a lighthouse in calm weather, it is almost impossible to realise that the sea sometimes breaks over the lantern. Such is, however, frequently the case, and an instance of this occurred not long after the completion of the Bishop's Rock Light, which is erected on a rock beyond the Scilly Islands, far out in the Atlantic. One of the builders told of a heavy sea striking under the lantern and carrying away the fog-bell, which hung by a stout arm of iron nearly three inches square. A few years ago the lighthouse keepers on this rock were in a terrible predicament during a hurricane, the violence of which was described as being fearful. The lighthouse was struck by enormous waves in quick succession, each causing a noise like the discharge of cannon, and making the massive stone building rock to and fro, so that every article fell away from its place. One fearful sea broke the great lens in several pieces, and another smashed the cylinders of the spare light, while sand from the bottom, thirty fathoms deep, was found heaped up on the lighthouse gallery. The power of these unbroken masses of water is so great that lately, at Wick, one of these shocks moved 'a concrete block of four hundred tons built up *in situ*.'

There is now an influential movement on foot to establish telegraphic communication between lighthouses, lightships, and the shore. It is certainly a question of the greatest moment, and it is impossible to say how many valuable lives, and what an immense quantity of property, might be saved if such a means of communication existed between lighthouses, lightships, and harbours and life-boat stations. Only very recently, a meeting was held at the Mansion House, and was presided over by the Lord Mayor, at which the following resolution was carried unanimously: 'That, in the opinion of this meeting, it is a

matter of urgent necessity that electric communication should be established between the various lighthouses, light-vessels, and the shore, in order that more speedy intimation of vessels wrecked and life and property in peril may be afforded to those ready to come to the rescue.' Steps were also taken to bring the matter under the attention of the government. The question is certainly one of national interest. At the present time, the signals from the lightships, by means of guns and rockets, only convey the tidings that a ship is on shore or in distress, and it is impossible to estimate the amount of help needed, or the position of the wreck—both matters of vital importance. Thus, two or three lifeboats at some dangerous points of the coast may proceed to the same vessel, which may prove to be only a fishing-smack; while a large passenger-ship may at the same time be left unaided, or with only the assistance of one boat. In the same way, if the position of a wreck could be made known, much, and, in many cases, most invaluable time, which is now frequently lost while making out her whereabouts, would be saved.

Another question of great importance is the best method of giving a distinctive character to lighthouses. The one final cause and purpose of a lighthouse is to make known to mariners with unmistakable precision a certain spot to be shunned as dangerous. If such exactitude is wanting, it may but help to lure them into positive peril. Of our coast-lights, about ninety per cent. are fixed, and it has been said that in many cases these may but too possibly be mistaken for something else. As is well known, our revolving lights may fairly be said in general to answer their purpose. They revolve in different periods; combinations of colour are employed; and there are also flashing lights. In the Admiralty list of lights, some are mentioned as both fixed and flashing; and of these, there are several varieties. Such 'fixed and flashing' lights are not now considered to be wholly satisfactory beacons, when the flashes occur at intervals of five or six minutes; since it is quite possible for a steamer travelling at sixteen or seventeen knots to miss the flashes, and mistake the position of the light. A revolving light is much better, and is gradually being more generally adopted. It can be seen at a greater distance, and is more easily distinguishable. Sir W. Thomson has successfully advocated this system, and has pointed out various improvements which might be made in existing revolving lights. He thinks that an eclipse of from fifty to sixty seconds is too long in dirty weather, and that the watching eye might easily let it slip before its bearings have been taken. He suggests that greater regularity should be aimed at in the periods of revolving lights, and he considers coloured distinction to be unsatisfactory, because it is so easy to mistake coloured lighthouses for the port-side lights of passing ships, and because instances have been known of red railway lights, and even those of apothecaries' shops, having been confounded with harbour lights.

Among other improvements in lighthouses, one of the best is the plan of making each spell out its name—on the familiar telegraphic alphabet principle—by a system of dot-and-dash eclipses, so that a seaman could at once tell at what light

he was looking. The movements for effecting these changes would, of course, be automatic, and the plan has already had seven years' trial on Belfast Lough. Sir W. Thomson's own Craigmoor light, in the Firth of Clyde, is another good example of this principle. Here a long and a short eclipse alternate twice, and there is then a short pause, giving sixteen seconds of unbroken light. This combination of four eclipses is made conventionally to denote the letter C, the initial of Craigmoor.

It would be easy to increase the utility of lighthouses. There is no reason why a light should merely tell ships that they are off a certain point of the coast. It could tell more; it could tell which way the tide was running, information which would be of great value to homeward-bound ships. Another idea is that lighthouses at particular hours of the night could give signals which would tell the Greenwich time, and thus enable vessels to correct their longitude. In our narrow seas, liable to alternate fog and storm, and crowded with the merchant navies of all nations, every effort should be made to render casualties less probable, and to lessen the perils to which those are exposed 'that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters.'

[Many difficulties naturally surround a question upon the settlement of which may depend the lives of many of our fellow-creatures. The difficulties that stand in the way of signalling by means of 'dot and dash' are greater than at first sight appear; and the following opinions on the subject, communicated to us by the captain of a vessel, have at least the merit of being from one possessed of practical knowledge:

'I am convinced,' he writes, 'that the only thing requisite in determining the character of lighthouse lights is to make them as simple as possible, and if practicable, let no two lights on the same coast have the same characteristic. Let the mariner feel confident, when he sees, for instance, a bright fixed light on a certain coast, that it must be such and such a light; for the simple reason that there is no other of the same character on that coast. He is then certain of his position; and surely plenty of combinations of the fixed, revolving, and intermittent lights either white or red can be conceived for our longest coast-line, without having two alike, unless at such a distance apart as to make mistake impossible. Certainly the "dot-and-dash" system, so far as it has been applied, has been successful, for the reason that it is as yet the distinctive characteristic of a certain light to which it has been applied, and is easily distinguishable. But place *all* our coast-lights under the same system, and the distinctive feature of this one light is obliterated, and the mariner confounded.

'Few people would credit the difficulty often experienced of timing a light at sea, it seems so easy a matter to distinguish between five, seven, fifteen, or twenty seconds; but standing on a steamer's bridge and holding on with both hands to keep one's self from rolling over the side, while a glimpse of the light is only caught when the vessel lifts on a sea, makes it no easy matter; and it is often impossible to judge the duration of one of our present half-minute revolving lights to within five or even ten seconds. It is only by

the merest guesswork, and the important knowledge that there is no other light of similar or nearly similar duration near your position, that you are able to say that that light is so and so. In such a case the "dot-and-dash" system would be worse than useless; so that of whatever duration our flashing and revolving lights may be, let no two of the same character be near each other of such duration as not to be clearly unmistakable one for the other.

'Again, the danger is urged of mistaking lighthouse lights for a steamer's mast-head light; and in answer to that I say that the only description of lighthouse light liable to be so mistaken is the white fixed light, though in clear weather it is unmistakable, owing to its superior brilliancy, for anything but what it is. In thick weather, a steamer's mast-head light, in order to illuminate the fog, as lighthouse lights invariably do, would have to be so close that the side-lights would also be visible.

'Our present system is now almost as perfect as possible. Let us stick to the distinctive feature of each light, so as to produce as little chance of mistaken identity as possible, and let science do its best to increase the power and brilliancy of our lighthouse lights, so as to make them even more distinctly visible, as in the case of the Lizard lighthouse *reflection*, which I have seen in the sky for more than two hours before the lights themselves were visible from the deck. I feel confident that any attempt to do away with the distinct individuality of our various lights will only lead to disaster. As they are at present, each of our lighthouse lights carries its name to the utmost limit of its range as unmistakably as possible, and will continue to do so as long as the peculiar characteristic of each light is maintained, but only till then. Make them all indicate their names by the "dot-and-dash" system, and I for one would not like to be the mariner whose safety depended upon his ability, on a dark dirty night, to distinguish the difference between a dot and a dash.']

THE COUNTER-SYNDICATE.

CHAPTER I.—A BRUIN STORM.

THE financial house of Fox, Smiles, and Naylum was known wherever the echoes of British commerce reverberated. Bank managers bowed before it; merchants held it in reverence; traders regarded it with something like awe. Its ramifications were vast; its sources of information were generally exact; its advices of the coming plethoras and scarcities of produce so early, that it played a master-part in the transactions of the City. It was linked with great financial houses in the capitals of the world; and through them it worked out the wondrous changes that came over the markets on which it operated. On a certain day in a certain year, now remote, Mr Smiles, who attended to the secret correspondence, wrote to the trusty agents of the firm in Paris, Messieurs De Predateur, Toutoël, & Cie, the following laconic note: '*Sell one hundred thousand bags Costa-Rica Coffee, to arrive October and November.*' A similar note was forwarded to Herren Sharfsinn und Geldmacher, the well-

known brokers of Hamburg. Another to the same purport was despatched to Messrs Buldose Brothers & Co., hailing from New York, Boston, and San Francisco, U.S.

In the meantime, Mr Fox saw Mr Box, the broker of Mincing Lane.

'A hundred thousand bags!' cried the latter, amazed—and he was not easily amazed—at the orders confided to him by Messrs Fox, Smiles, and Naylum. 'Why, my dear sir, it will quite demoralise the market!'

Mr Fox was a clean-shaven man, but not the faintest ripple of feeling responded on his face, to the astonishment of Mr Box. 'A hundred thousand bags Costa-Rica, delivered by the twelfth proximo,' repeated Mr Fox calmly. 'Of course you will sell as quietly as you can. We have every desire to keep the market firm. I trust implicitly to your judgment, Mr Box.'

'It is the greatest thing ever attempted in my time,' said the broker when alone. He was old, and undrilled in the ways of cablegram-trimmed commerce, then just beginning its career.

Mr Box went about that day in a musing mood, and he was not a musing man. He sold parcel after parcel of Costa-Rica Coffee, and by the afternoon twenty thousand bags were disposed of, for the market was bare of the article. The next day, under a thaw of price, more was sold; and by the end of the week, the City and the great northern towns had enabled the broker to complete his commission.

But the market had grown very unstable, and coffee of all descriptions was singularly perturbed. The talk among merchants was unusually animated. Where was this vast stock of coffee lying? Had some speculators been accumulating a heap, which was now launched upon the market by pressure of the banks? Had they been misled by West Indian advices? Was a big collapse impending, that would cause a financial storm? If so, to your tents, O Israel!

Brokers were agitated too. A sort of mania seemed to be running through the coffee world. At Havre and Brest, there reigned an unaccountable depression, consequent upon what seemed forced sales of Costa-Rica. The produce market at Paris was electrical, for a rumour ran that a gigantic lot of Costa-Rica had been thrown upon the Hamburg market, which staggered under it alarmingly.

But most astounding of all was the news coming from New York. Coffee had there begun to run downwards, and it appeared that Boston and San Francisco were deluged with selling orders. Strange, very strange; everywhere people were offering coffee, especially Costa-Rica sorts.

Mr Quick, the confidential clerk of Messrs Fox, Smiles, and Naylum, was one of the lesser magnates of the City. People supposed him to be acquainted with all the ramifications of the great house he served. But that was not correct. There were confidences too sacred even for his highly remunerated fidelity to be intrusted with. He knew many marvellous things connected with the commercial mysteries of his firm, but he did not know all. His employers had faith in his ignorance of their secret transactions. Now, Mr Quick had as strong a desire to be a

millionaire as any man then inhabiting the purlieus of the City. He had, too, a genius for financial intrigue, and extraordinary grasp of commercial affairs in their most complicated entanglements. These gifts had caused his unprecedented advancement in ten years from the position of junior clerk to that he now occupied. No firm was readier to reward business ability exercised on their especial behalf, than Fox & Co. Perceiving Mr Quick's abilities, he was advanced from post to post, from stipend to stipend, until he was everything but a partner in the concern.

Being under no illusion of personal unworthiness, he thought the crowning step of at least a small partnership in the ladder of advancement his simple due. Messrs Fox, Smiles, and Naylum thought quite otherwise, especially Mr Naylum, who had risen from the counting-house himself, and who had been jealous of Mr Quick for some time. Mr Smiles also was averse. Mr Quick had offended him also by being too clever. In a big transaction in spice, Mr Quick had foretold disaster, against the opinion of Mr Smiles, who was sanguine of a rise. The disaster came; for the shrewdest miscalculate now and then. Only Mr Fox was favourable to taking the ambitious clerk into a small partnership, though even he grudged that the splendid harvests reaped by himself and the others should be diminished by a further 'divide.'

So Mr Quick was informed that he must be content to be simply the highly esteemed jackal of the establishment, as the lions were unwilling to admit him to share their honours and glory. He received the verdict with becoming fortitude, and retired to ponder how he should compass by indirect means, that denied him otherwise.

This happened about three months before Messrs Fox, Smiles, and Naylum became large sellers of coffee.

A fortnight after Mr Box the broker had executed his leviathan commission, young Box, his son, met Mr Quick at the lunch-table both frequented, though they rarely came in contact there. Young Box, like most young City men, was unusually wise for his years. At twenty-two he knew more than his father, who had frequented Mincing Lane for forty years.

'I say, Quick,' he said, observing the latter looking for a seat, 'come here;' pointing to a chair beside his own.

Mr Box lunched copiously, as hearty young men who can afford delicacies of meat and drink, are apt to do. This morning he had won a sovereign from a friend at the cheerful game of 'Nap,' as they came to the City in the train. Strong in the consciousness of his deserts for this achievement, he had treated himself to a small bottle of Mumm's champagne, a drink he preferred to all others, though he was sadly limited in this pleasure by the small allowance his father permitted.

Rather to the annoyance of Mr Quick, who was not a companionable man, and who had, besides, but a small opinion of young Box, the youngster insisted on his sharing a bottle of champagne with him. The hospitality would have been almost rudely declined, for Mr Quick

was in an irritable mood, as clever people often are, but for the remark which closed the invitation: 'If your governors liked, they could drown us both in champagne, after this last go!'

Mr Quick cast a rapid glance at the leering eyes of his companion. He sat down, and the waiter filled his glass. By the time the bottle was emptied, young Box wanted two things—a cigar in the smoking-room, and a further talk with Mr Quick, who had shown a singular appreciativeness of the young gentleman's smart chatter about the coffee market. No man could excel Mr Quick in suave attentiveness, when it suited his purpose, or could more favourably excite self-admiration in another. And Box looked upon Mr Quick as one of the young City heroes, who had fought his way to the front in something like a miraculous manner. Everybody admitted that he would become one of the big men of the future, and it gratified young Box to be seen in his company. So they went to the smoking-room, which was empty; and under the influence of a brace of cheroots and a couple of glasses of Chartreuse, Box laid bare all the movements of the coffee transaction, supposing, of course, that Mr Quick knew all about them. He revelled with vulpine delight at the tremendous results of the tactics of Fox, Smiles, and Naylum upon all the markets. Such smartness was worthy of all praise; and the youngster hugged himself with the supreme satisfaction, that his father had a share in the business. Young Box was a true child of the age he lived in.

Mr Quick had been away for a holiday on a fishing excursion, and was quite unaware of what had taken place in his absence. He invited young Box to look him up at his lodgings, and sent him away from the *tête-à-tête* in the smoking-room almost delirious with self-conceit.

That night, Mr Quick stayed late at the office. Before leaving, he had a perfect grasp of the coffee production and consumption for the previous three years. He smiled strangely at the totals emerged from his calculations; and when the whole problem was worked out, a strong exclamation burst from him, and he said: 'Now, Mr Smiles, you shall acknowledge your master.'

During the ensuing fortnight, the coffee market went tumbling about in queer zigzag fashion; now down with a plunge, now up with a sharp rebound. In the words of broker Box, it was demoralised. The great impact of Fox, Smiles, and Naylum had led to hundreds of smaller impacts from various quarters. Hebrews in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Vienna, Buda-Pesth, and elsewhere, hearing what was going on in London, Paris, Hamburg, and New York, became most anxious to show due sympathy with the movements of those great markets. Other citizens likewise manifested an eagerness to further lower the price of coffee of all descriptions, but chiefly Costa-Ricas, and sold largely upon speculative account.

So the game went on right merrily. The great bears* became the parents of a wonder-

* Although commercial slang has a currency beyond the purlieus of the Exchanges, many of our readers may not know the exact import of the terms 'bull' and 'bear.' The former is a speculator who buys stocks or

fully numerous family of little bears of the most diverse nationalities. Even Turkey had some of them; for with the downrun of Costa-Rica sorts, Mocha fell profoundly, and the followers of the Prophet were enabled to enjoy their one permitted stimulant at a price so equitable, that quite a burst of gratitude ran through the streets of Constantinople, and grocers rose to unwonted altitudes in popular estimation.

Those who took part in the coffee earthquake, as some one called it, will never forget those stirring times; far beyond the confines of the coffee markets did the shocks and tremors range. Other commodities were affected. Tea, for instance, began to show coquettish conduct unknown to the oldest brokers; sugar palpitated from China to Peru; chickory went crazy. Old traders declared that if coffee was to be sold at the prices it had fallen to, chickory would be henceforward a mere historical article.

But the strangest characteristics of this fevered time were the absurd paragraphs and leaders which appeared in the newspapers. One was headed:

'Good News for Coffee-drinkers.'—It has hitherto been supposed that the coffee shrub is limited to the regions now devoted to its cultivation, and that it can only be grown under special conditions of climate and soil. Also that the species is limited to a few varieties. This has been recently proved inaccurate. The great German traveller and *savant*, Professor Weissaliedinge, has discovered in Central America vast forests of a coffee-bearing tree, most of which grow to upwards of fifty feet high! It is said that the size of the berries is four times that of ordinary coffee, and that the flavour of this new species is superior to the most aromatic kinds grown in Arabia. The immense supplies from this source will soon place coffee in abundance upon the tables of the poorest classes, and convert a luxury into a common necessary of life.

This paragraph went the round of the provincial press, and created a flutter in the breasts of the grocers whose eyes fell upon it. No wonder that chickory and other substances employed to modify the powerful effects of unsophisticated coffee, fell into discredit. If coffee were to become as abundant as the paragraph alleged, it would be taking an advantage of the public to mix it at all.

Another paragraph was entitled:

'A Revolution on the Breakfast Table.'—Hitherto the world has depended upon the bounty of Nature for the beverages that grace the morning meal. But Science, which neither slumbers nor sleeps, has just won a triumph, that threatens to abolish the Chinese leaf, the Arabian berry, and the seductive Theobroma nut, and render mankind independent of similar vegetable productions

commodities in the hope that when the fortnightly day of settlement comes round, the price of the stock or commodities will have risen, in which case he will pocket as profit the 'difference' between the price at which he bought and the price on the day of settlement. A 'bear', on the contrary, sells largely first, and buys afterwards at a lower price when the market has become glutted. Of course, if the price should rise when it is expected to fall, and *vice versa*, the 'bull' or the 'bear' must pay the 'difference' when it is against him. A 'syndicate' is a combination of 'bulls' or 'bears', and is a new method of commercial speculation.

altogether. The great French chemist, M. Syntheseur, after twenty years' researches, has demonstrated that *theine* and *caffeine*, the essential principles of tea and coffee, are merely forms of nitrogen. These he has succeeded in making in enormous quantities. All that was wanted to produce tea and coffee in the chemist's laboratory was a woody fibre that would absorb *theine* and *caffeine* in the right proportions. This has been the difficulty with which M. Syntheseur has struggled. It has now been overcome by one of the pupils of the great *savant*, who by accident spilled some laboratory *caffeine* upon a heap of sawdust. In a few hours the mixture became so completely transformed into a substance resembling ordinary coffee, that one of the porters of the establishment, supposing it to be the veritable article, made an infusion of it for his breakfast. The extraordinary aroma attracted the attention of M. Syntheseur's gifted pupil, who found thus, by pure hazard, that missing link in the great chain which the Professor commenced to forge twenty years ago.

'We understand this chemically manufactured coffee can be sold retail at a penny per pound! Moreover, the gain of the public will be the greater, because, owing to sawdust being already in a pulverised state, coffee-mills will no longer be required. Of course, the method of preparing chemical coffee is a scientific secret; but it is said that a gigantic Limited Liability Company, having depôts in every country of the world, is now in process of formation to work the patents of M. Syntheseur.

'Sawdust, hitherto considered little better than rubbish, and of no use whatever, beyond spreading on the floors of butchers' shops, has now risen to importance. Here is another waste product of our industries proving of priceless worth! We have long known that Baron Liebig was in the habit of making quatern loaves out of deal planks, and that a billet of wood furnished a staff in a double sense, namely, a cudgel for defending the outer man, and a French-roll for keeping the stomach in awe. But that sawdust should take the place of our Congous, Mochas, and Theobromas, is, as we have before said, a Revolution on the Breakfast Table.'

These paragraphs were shown to Mr Quick, who read them with an eye that lost something of its habitual hardness, while his mouth assumed a quite unwonted genial curve.

INDIA IN THE RAINS.

BY AN ANGLO-INDIAN.

I MENTIONED on a former occasion that the most trying period in the Indian 'hot weather' was the interval of calm between the north-east and south-west monsoons. That lull has arrived, and Nature, exhausted by the fierce heat of May, seems overpowered; the heavens above us are as brass, and the earth as iron; animal life is in a state of quiescence—even the crows hop or fly about dejectedly with gaping beaks. The trees are in absolute rest, longing for a breath to bring movement to their leaves and twigs, wondering, perhaps, why the subsoil moisture, which they have been so patiently distilling into the atmosphere for months past, is not returning in grateful showers,

to wash their dust-begrimed leaves, and open out their breathing pores. The earth is hard as adamant, and of a uniform whitish brown; green is nowhere visible, except in cultivated patches, or in the neighbourhood of wells; and the shadow of death, as it were, rests on the land.

Yet the enforced sterility is not absolute; the Mudrá (*Calotropis gigantea*), for instance, rejoices in the most sterile wastes, and exhibits its large leathery leaves, pink and white flower bunches, and singular pods, as a proof of the presence of a beneficent Providence. And if you closely examine the surface of the arid soil, you will discover numerous specimens of a diminutive convolvulus, displaying its tiny leaves and delicate pinkish-white flowers, as another proof that life is struggling for existence amid the prevailing death. Many a time, like Mungo Park's moss, that humble little plant has read me a lesson of patience and encouragement; and you feel that if such a diminutive and humble plant can rejoice amid the surrounding sterility, its joy will in due time be imparted to the wastes around.

And so it happens. The eager observer of the southern sky is at last rewarded by seeing in mid-June, or earlier, a few cirrhus clouds adorning the sunset; in a day or two they have coalesced into cirro-stratus, which the setting sun gilds with effulgence; another day or two develops them into cumulous masses, into the dark interiors of which the sun flings his parting rays. We watch on into night, and see these depths illumined by distant lightning; and now we know that the monsoon is approaching, and that we shall soon hear the noise of its chariot-wheels. Next day, the greater portion of the southern sky is veiled with cirro-cumulus, and we feel the breath of the approaching blast in grateful puffs of cool air. During that night, or at the latest, next day, deliverance arrives. During daytime you may notice the heavens waxing 'black with clouds,' from which suddenly a dazzling flash of lightning leaps out, immediately followed perhaps by a deafening roar of thunder. Then the storm comes on; flash follows flash, and peal succeeds peal in awful grandeur, and the labouring clouds discharge their burden in tremendous rain. Oh, the joy of that downpour, and how eagerly we throw open every door to admit the delicious breeze! The glad watchword on every lip is now, 'The rains are in;' and Nature re-echoes the welcome. How delicious the smell of dust laid by rain! You feel as if you could not sniff it up sufficiently. And how strange the cleanliness which meets you on all sides. It seems that spring green has set in everywhere in a moment, for the lately dust-begrimed trees stand out bravely in their legitimate verdure, rejoicing in the cleansing and invigorating bath they have enjoyed.

The first downpour often lasts for twenty-four hours; and when you go abroad, you are amazed at the change in the landscape. Those white, arid wastes which dazzled your eye, are now clothed in the most delicate emerald green; all the humbler classes of vegetation seem to be engaged in a race for existence, each vying with its neighbour in assuming the verdant garments necessary for the struggle. Look at the roadside ditches, and you will see sights equally amazing. Before the rains, they were simply shallow trenches, obscured by dust from the road, and apparently

utterly void of life, animal or vegetable. Observe them now, lined with pools of pellucid water, resting on vegetation rank and green, and teeming with animal life, aquatic larvæ of all kinds, small fish and frogs. Among the last, you will probably see a huge green-and-yellow bull-frog, six to eight inches long, either submerged in the water, his nose and eyes alone exposed, or resting on the bank waterwards. If you approach him quietly, you may catch him in his song of jubilation at the arrival of the rains, his cheeks puffing out as large as plums, and the sound carrying you back to your school-days. Whence came this sudden life, and where were its components a week ago? Our attempts at answer land us in one of the greatest puzzles afforded by India—the question of fish-showers, two of which I have seen.

It is easy enough to account for the larvæ of aquatic insects, and not difficult to understand that their eggs and the frogs may have lain dormant in the mud, awaiting 'the scent of water.' But whence, in the first instance, came the fish? This is hardly the place for ventilating this question, so I will merely describe briefly two fish-showers, and then narrate two facts which may throw light on the subject.

During the rains of 1864, I was residing at Arrah, in a large house with a flat roof, and during a heavy shower, the cry was raised by my servants that fish were falling from heaven. I rushed out, and found the compound (court-yard) strewn with small dead fish, from two to three inches in length; while from the roof, two or three bucketfuls were procured. Whence came the fish? Undoubtedly, from the sky; but how they got there, I am not prepared to state, unless they may have been carried into the air from their native element, by a waterspout. Arrah is situated in the corner where the Sone enters the Ganges, and is about seven miles from either river—the only possible sources of the fish.

The second fall occurred four years after at Patna—which is about one to two miles from the Ganges—and also during the rains. On starting on my rounds one morning, I drove over a bridge crossing a then dry watercourse. During my absence, heavy rain fell; and on my returning home, I found the watercourse full, and a crowd of natives shovelling out quantities of the same small fish, all dead.

Another curious fact relating to fishes. On one occasion, while stationed at Arrah, I came across a specimen of the climbing perch (*Anabas scandens*) struggling along the road at least half a mile from the Sone, to which I had it transferred alive and vigorous. It may have embarked on that strange journey to spawn, leaving its eggs in a roadside ditch; but then a difficulty arises in its being alone.

I have often come across vagrant turtle miles from any water, and on one occasion found a nest, the young from which might have been found in a roadside pool, occasioning curiosity as to how they got there.

Insect life starts into profuse existence on the setting in of the rains, and often occasions us great annoyance at dinner-time; the white table-cloth and the careless presence of lamps thereon affording irresistible attraction to countless hordes of invaders, among which winged termites—that is, white ants—stand pre-eminent; and their invasion

is very remarkable. You have recently arrived in the country, are living in a *kutch* house (built of sun-dried bricks and mud-mortar), have made yourself comfortable therein, and are going to have your first dinner-party. All your nick-nacks are proudly displayed on your table, and in its centre blazes your lamp, just unpacked. The dinner-hour approaches, and you nervously take a look round to see that all is right. One or two insects, new to you, are fluttering about the lamp, or on the table, and in brushing them off, you perhaps notice that the same insects are swarming out of a corner or from the floor. Your guests arrive; and while receiving and marshalling them in to dinner, the insect invasion has assumed formidable proportions, so that when you sit down to soup, you find the air around the lamp alive with termites, and your fair cloth covered with them. Every soup-plate is stuffed with them, as also your glasses of sherry. In despair, you appeal to the company, or to your table attendant; and are advised to remove the lamp at once from the table. On doing so, the invaders on the wing are diverted; and then you notice that the thousands on the table have dropped their wings broadcast, and are now chasing one another about. In comparative darkness, you finish your dinner, and adjourn to the drawing-room. When your guests have left, curiosity takes you back to the dining-room; and you find the table and the site of the removed lamp strewn with myriads of wings, and their owners nowhere.

Watch the insects outside, and the sight is equally wonderful. From a spot in the ground where you would least expect it, you find one or two termites fluttering into the air; watch them narrowly, and you will find a minute hole, far too minute for the hordes which are squeezing out of it and then rising into the air. Around the hole, half-a-dozen wingless workers are fussing frantically. But let us watch the perfect insects, and return afterwards to the workers. Soon we see a pyramidal cloud of insects in the air, the apex resting over the hole. This becomes denser and spreads wider as the breeze catches their wings. News of the flight have been telegraphed far and wide. Sparrows and crows, fly-catchers and king-crows, kites and mynas, flock to the scene, and gorge on the fliers. (Kites feast laboriously; every termite is individually seized with the talons, and then disposed of by the beak.) If evening is setting in, bats and even frugivorous flying-foxes join in the revel, and termites are devoured in myriads. Turn again to the hole whence the last termite has emerged, and you will find the workers busily engaged in plastering it up again, and destroying all traces of the flight. The few survivors of the swarm seek the earth, drop their wings, and disappear. The dropping of the wings is a marvellous process; two pair, with all their machinery of blood-vessels, nerves, and ligaments, are instantaneously dispensed with, and the insect seems livelier than before; and this mutilation occurs precisely at the exact moment. Seize a termite by the wings at the wrong moment, and he will struggle violently to escape, the wings remaining firm in your grasp. Seize it at the right moment, and you will see it lift its body upwards and backwards like an earwig, deliberately unhook its wings, and so escape.

Here is another incident of the rain period. You are sitting at dinner with all your doors open, and suddenly you hear a familiar sound, and a beetle is wheeling 'his droning flight' around the room. Flop! he falls on the table half-stunned. You seize him, and are amazed at the strength of his struggles, and still further at the squeak he utters; showing that he must have vocal organs—like the death's-head moth, which squeaks loudly when touched. Examine him, and you will find that he is the Egyptian scarab (*Scarabeus sacer*) or dung beetle, varying in size from half an inch to an inch and a half long, and relatively, I believe, the most powerful animal in the world. Take an inch specimen, and place him on the tablecloth under a full quart bottle of wine or beer. Presently, you will see the bottle move; and if unchecked, it will slide mysteriously across the table, pushed by the giant beneath in its efforts to escape.

Yet one other incident. Towards the close of the rainy season, generally in September, 'flying-bugs' appear on the scene, attracted as usual by the light; small black and shining heteropterous insects, surcharged with a disagreeably powerful odour, which they generously distribute all around. You may encounter a flight when out driving in the evening, and perhaps feel something creeping in your whiskers. On raising your hand to eject the intruder, your nose is overpowered, and your fingers defiled, with the odour.

These insect visitations are undoubtedly a trial; but they are not confined to India; for in Scotland, both at Arran and Lasswade, I have been put to flight by midges, which were infinitely more ferocious than those out here.

Travelling in the rains, away from the rail, is just as serious as it used to be in old times, especially if your vehicle be the palkee. It is no joke to be caught by the rains on a journey, and have to put up with the shelter of a serai (roadside hut) or a tree, because the nullah ahead of you, which yesterday was a dry watercourse, is now a formidable stream. No joke, in the midst of pelt-ing rain, the thickest darkness, and the roar of thunder, to have your palkee put down in the road—its own stream—because your torch has been saturated and extinguished, and the bearers have lost both their way and their heads. No joke, under these circumstances, to try and keep yourself dry. Not only will the driving rain come in at every chink, but the splash from the road gradually wets you from below. So the weary night-hours pass, and the gloomy break of day finds you quite alone. The bearers have gone off in quest of shelter, and will suit their convenience in returning to you; and, wet and weary, you must do your best, until the rain lifts a little, to permit of your onward progress.

How well I recollect being thus caught in 1854 on the road from Meerut to Umballa! Anxious to push on, I had reached the dāk bungalow at Jagādre, and thrown myself on a bed to sleep while breakfast was being prepared. I had hardly done so, when a terrific crash of thunder made me jump to my feet, ushering in a storm which effectually dissipated all ideas of rest. When the afternoon starting-hour arrived, the bearers told me it was useless proceeding, as all the rivers and nullahs between Jagādre and Umballa—and they are not a few—would be impassable. With the obstinacy of youth, I

determined on proceeding, notwithstanding the heavy rain, and I then encountered the experience above described.

When my bearers did come back, they told me that a raft had been prepared for my transit, which cheered me considerably. Presently, I was told that it was ready, and poked out my head to see.

'Where is the raft?' I inquired.

'Here, my lord,' pointing to nine round earthen pots lashed together into a square with bamboos and twine, the whole concern floating uneasily on the troubled stream.

'Am I to cross on that?' I feebly inquired.

'Yes, my lord. There are no boats on this nullah.'

Alarmed at the nature of the vessel which was now to carry Caesar and his fortunes, I determined that the latter should go first; and so my two boxes were lashed to the frail structure, and two men swam over with it. Caesar's chariot (the palkee) then followed successfully, and then that hero's turn came. Assisted by the bearers, he squatted on the wet globe of the central pot, carefully arranged the centre of gravity, with stolid dignity closed his eyes, set his teeth, and grasping the slippery pots, launched out on the flood, his legion of bearers swimming around and guiding the frail raft. That the voyage was successful is evident from the commentary now penned, which may further announce that on that memorable day, without bridges and without boats, Caesar crossed more rivers, each in a different fashion, than has fallen to most heroes in a lifetime.

The temperature during the rains is very pleasant; but when a break occurs, allowing the sun to come out and evaporation to set in, it becomes very muggy, the still air being laden with moisture. Then it is that prickly-heat adds its quota of annoyance to those predisposed to that troublesome affection. But taken all round, the rains are a pleasant season, and a happy preparation for the full enjoyment of our unequalled cold weather, some account of which I shall give in my concluding paper.

THE STORY OF A THUMB-MARK.

IV.

ELIJAH CARSON the detective was a somewhat remarkable man. As he sat down, you might not have noticed anything particularly striking in his appearance, beyond a look of concentration in his face. Nor did his looks belie his character. He was a man of inventive resource, of tenacity of purpose; and in the pursuit of his profession, he took an enthusiastic interest. And at present, called to investigate the mysterious murder of Anthony Greig, he had no other purpose than to demonstrate the crime as it really happened. He had been sent on the case when the first intelligence arrived; and his first object was to find young Anthony Greig. In this he anticipated little difficulty, for he was informed, by one of the clerks who had seen Beesley, that Greig was about to proceed to London. Acting on this information, and hoping to overtake the fugitive before he should reach the Metropolis, he lost no time in getting to the railway platform. He had a photograph of the young man with him; and with this

and the description received from Sinnott, he felt fairly confident of finding Greig, if not on the journey, in London itself. Conning the picture, Carson paced the platform, and mentally had his eye on scores of people at once. The optical battery of Argus himself could scarcely have more carefully scrutinised the numerous intending passengers than did his one pair of steel-gray eyes. Suddenly, his face lost its appearance of effort, as with a smile he jumped into a compartment occupied by a young fellow, morosely sitting in one corner, and smoking.

'Mr Greig, I believe?' said Carson, scanning curiously the other's face.

He started; but was not unusually disconcerted as he replied: 'That is my name. But I—really—I really don't recall your name?'

'Carson—Elijah Carson. You don't know me. I am sent to bring you back. There is no help for it. Take care what you say; you are not bound to criminate yourself.'

'Carson the detective?'

Carson nodded affirmatively.

'What is wrong, then? I am going to London; and I don't recognise your right to prevent me. I have debts; but they are not legal debts, if that is what you are after.'

'Pooh! that is nothing. This morning, Mr Anthony Greig, of Greig & Co., Limehouse Street, was found in his office, dead.'

The look of utter dismay that covered the young fellow's face was no effort of a guilty actor to counterfeit surprise. 'My uncle dead!' he exclaimed.

'The lad's no more a murderer than I am,' thought Carson, as he scanned the pale and discomposed countenance before him. 'Come, come,' he said aloud; 'men have been murdered before this. The question is, Who did it? I don't mind telling you that your disappearance led to suspicion; and as soon as I could find your intended route, I went off after you.'

'Murdered?' groaned the lad, as the pair quitted the train and slowly retired from the platform. 'I know nothing of this.'

'Ay, that is the word; though there is just a chance it was suicide. Now, listen, and take my advice. If—mark, I only say if—you did it, keep your own counsel; you will have enough to stand against without my evidence. If you are innocent—well, you needn't swear to it now—give the clearest possible account of your doings since yesterday. Tell your solicitor everything; and if you like to trust me—he offered his long nervous hand as he spoke—'if you like to trust me, my lad, I am your friend. First impressions count for a good deal in these cases; and mine are, that you are all right.'

Greig warmly grasped the offered hand. 'Thanks,' said he. 'I have nothing to conceal. I quarrelled with my uncle yesterday about my debts; betting, you know.' (Carson nodded.) 'I suppose that is why, when I disappeared, I was suspected. Oh, my poor uncle! I was his heir—my cousin Grace and I. He told me so. Why should I have been such a fool as to vex him as I did?'

Carson frowned. 'You know you are his heir, you say? Nothing, no money or valuables were stolen; your knife was found on the desk; you have a key of the office; no violence has been done to the premises. All this looks very bad

against you. Now, collect yourself. Where were you yesterday and last night? Who saw you? Account clearly to me for the time spent since you left your uncle. And don't tell me, I warn you, for your own sake, anything but the facts.'

'I'll tell you just what I did. After the scene I had with him in the morning, I walked out of the office—I don't know where; but I know I got to Allenton Hotel, and got some dinner there. I could not go home; and I went back to Limehouse Street at six o'clock, and waited for him to come out. But he stayed late. I waited, I should think, more than an hour—yes, two hours, for I remember eight o'clock striking. I was walking up and down; and at last, when I came in view of the window again, it was dark, and as no one came out, I thought I had missed my uncle. Then I walked fast homewards, to overtake him'—

'Did you see nobody, or rather did anybody see you, whilst waiting outside?'

'O yes. Several of the workpeople passed. Tim, the man with one arm, who was hurt by the machinery, passed me; and so did Morris the cooper.'

'Notice you?'

'O yes. "Good-evening, Mr Anthony," or something of that kind, they said.'

'Well, you were saying you walked home'—

'Yes, very fast, to overtake him—my uncle. I wondered at still missing him, and was much annoyed. I would not go in. I saw Robert—Mr Slater, I mean, the solicitor—leave the house; but I avoided him; and then I went to a friend's place, James Beesley, in Harrington Street; he has apartments there. I stayed with him all night, and told him my difficulties.'

'Of your own accord, or did he ask you?'

'Oh, he asked me. He asked me what was the matter with me. And then I told him of the scene I had had; and that I was going to clear off to London, and stop that atrocious betting.'

'Does your friend, Mr Beesley, bet?'

'O yes. I told him to let our friends know I had decamped. It's shabby, I know; but what else was there for it? After all, it's only a rough-and-ready way of bankruptcy.'

They were by this time on their way back to where the unfortunate young fellow was to be lodged for the night, pending the coroner's inquest next morning. Little more passed between the two, except that occasionally Carson asked a question as he ruminated on the various bearings of the case. He was convinced the young man was not trying to deceive him; but he could not help wishing that the jury who would try the case had seen the lad's face on first hearing of his uncle's death. The world at large judges by facts, and not impressions.

V.

On the morning after the body of Anthony Greig had been found, the inquest was held, and his nephew was arraigned as the suspected murderer of the old man. After the usual preliminaries of inspecting the body, and the like, evidence was led as to the circumstances under which the deceased might have met his death; and notwithstanding the keen cross-examination of witnesses by Mr Slater, on behalf of the young

man placed at the bar, the evidence all pointed in one direction, namely, the implication of young Anthony Greig as the murderer of his uncle. The quarrel on the previous day between the uncle and nephew was spoken of, and the threat repeated with which the young man was heard to take leave of his relative. Tim, the one-armed man, and Morris the cooper, bore witness to the fact that they had seen the accused loitering about the works on the evening of the murder, and that shortly after he had disappeared, the light in his uncle's room was seen to have been put out. They had naturally thought that young Anthony was simply waiting to accompany his uncle home; and it was not till they had heard that the young man's knife had been found beside the body of the deceased, that they remembered that the accused was seen by them as stated. The two men gave their testimony with evident reluctance, as young Anthony was rather a favourite among the workpeople; but the evidence was too clear to be set aside, and the jury had no hesitation in committing the young man for trial on the capital charge of murder.

While the final formalities of the inquest were being proceeded with, Mr Slater sat at the table with an anxious and thoughtful look upon his face. No doubt, his thoughts were away with the daughter of the dead man, whose natural anguish over her father's lamentable end would be heightened and unbittered by the thought that her own cousin, who had lived under the same roof with them, had evidently been the guilty instrument of the old man's death. Mr Slater had seen Miss Grace that morning, and had assured her that nothing would be left undone on his part to clear the name of her cousin from the awful charge that lay against it, as both of them were convinced that, whatever differences may have existed between the old man and his nephew, the latter was utterly incapable of the crime of which he was suspected. But now, after hearing the evidence that had been led, the young lawyer was somewhat staggered and shaken in his belief in the innocence of young Anthony; and as he recalled to mind the succession of blackening circumstances which linked the accused with the crime charged against him, he felt that any attempts to save him would be all but hopeless.

As he sat thus, his eye fell upon the various articles produced at the inquest, and now ranged upon the table, having to do with the condition in which the body of the deceased was found; and among these was the white-handled pocket-knife, stained with blood, which had belonged to the young man accused of the crime. It was one of the fatal links in the chain of evidence against him. But there were other articles likewise blood-stained, and among these was a sheet of paper on which the old man had written the date, preliminary to commencing a letter to some correspondent or other. The letter was never written; for the hand of the murderer had clutched him then, and the sheet was now dabbled with the life-blood of the unfortunate old man. With a kind of morbid curiosity, Robert Slater put out his hand and took up the letter. As he looked at it, his eye assumed its wonted clear and eager expression, and for a moment it seemed as if he was about to rise and request the coroner to stay pro-

ceedings. But second thoughts were apparently against this, and he kept his seat. In a few minutes the Court rose, and the young man at the bar was led away in the custody of the police, to await his trial at the next assizes.

As the people were leaving the court-room, Mr Slater leant over to Carson the detective, whispered something, and pointed with his finger to the letter which he had just been examining. Carson, so incited, took up the paper, and placing it among the other articles, carried the whole with him out of court.

The young lawyer followed closely at his heels. When they had reached the detective's private room, the latter laid down the articles which he had carried thither, and singled out the letter to which Mr Slater had directed his attention. He looked at it scrutinisingly for a few minutes, and then turning to the lawyer, said: 'I see nothing here of any consequence. There are various blood-stains on the sheet, but nothing which seems to point to anything particular.'

Mr Slater took the letter in his hand. 'Do you see that blotch, as if made with half-dried blood?' he asked, pointing to a large oval stain near the inner edge of the sheet of paper. 'Well, don't you observe it is the impression of a man's thumb? It is that of the left hand, if I mistake not. See, there are the grooves or furrows of the skin distinctly marked; and if you open up the double sheet you will find a similar finger-mark on the reverse side. But the latter is not so well defined as the print of the thumb; and I think this will be of use to us.'

'I see what you point out,' said Carson; 'but what purpose can these markings serve?'

'I will tell you,' said the lawyer. 'Just the other week I was reading in a scientific journal that the arrangement of the grooves or furrows on the skin of the finger, shown in such an impression as this, is not the same in all men, but that every individual may be distinguished by the characteristic markings thus obtained. In China, for instance, all holders of public offices, and especially soldiers, are known by their finger-mark, and several cases of crime and desertion have been detected by reference to these marks. Besides, when any one possesses the finger-mark of any individual not otherwise known to him, it is found to be impossible for another man to personate that individual, because a comparison of their finger-marks would at once detect the deception.'

'But how will this serve you in this case?' asked the detective, naturally cautious as to admitting the force of evidence of such a novel kind.

'In this way,' said Mr Slater. 'We must take means to get the finger-mark of every man in the establishment of Greig & Co., as also that of the deceased man, and of his nephew. This can easily be done; and thereafter, by an idea which has occurred to me, namely, by photographing each impression, we will arrive at the fact whether or not any one of these marks agrees with the mark on this sheet of paper. Meantime, the utmost secrecy will be necessary as to our intentions, so that none of the workmen take alarm, and escape us.'

'But why,' said the detective, 'should the workmen be specially singled out, and not the clerks also?'

'Because,' answered the lawyer, 'I am all but certain the two impressions on this sheet of paper have been produced by the finger and thumb of a man who uses tools, and has a hard hand. The furrow-markings are broad and flattened, and the great size of the thumb is extremely noticeable; and by these together I am led to think that we have got a clue to the person who committed the murder, and that that person is not young Anthony Greig, however darkly circumstances may appear against him at present.'

EQUAL TO THE OCCASION.

To be equal to the occasion, is undoubtedly a natural gift, and there is apparently no royal road to its attainment. The possessors, however, of such an inestimable blessing are somewhat few and far between. Without a doubt, many of us can refer back, not perhaps without feelings of regret, to more than one occasion on which we might have made a very appropriate remark or observation—only, we didn't think of it at the time. When we did think of it, it was too late; we had allowed the golden opportunity to slip by; in fact, we were not equal to the occasion.

To be equal to the occasion, admits of no particular length of time for thinking, or beating about the bush for an answer; the reply, to have effect, must be almost instantaneous. Some years ago, when the seas were infested by a lawless crew, the captain of an English vessel sailed from a Spanish port with a number of passengers aboard, and among them was a timid Frenchman, who evinced the greatest fear lest the vessel should be taken by one of the Saltee rovers, and they should all be made slaves to the Moors. 'Don't you be at all alarmed, my good sir,' cried the captain; 'for before I'd allow my ship to fall into the hands of those confounded piratical rascals, I'd blow her into the air.' Unfortunately for us, the account closes here; otherwise, it would be highly interesting to learn, whether the nervous foreigner altogether approved of this ingenious plan of escaping from the clutches of these marauding gentry. It was an instance, however, on the part of the captain, although rather startling in its character, of being equal to the occasion.

In the *Antiquary*, the learned Mr Oldbuck asks his gallant nephew whether the men of his regiment would not feel renewed heart and courage if, at the close of a toiling day, they found they were bivouacking near the tomb of some famous hero. The answer of the young soldier was not only amusing, but exhibited an amount of forethought not often met with. 'My conviction is,' said he, 'that they would feel not only more encouraged, but much better pleased, if they found themselves near a poultry-yard.'

There was once a soldier in the army of the Duke of Marlborough who, taking the name of that distinguished General, was severely reprimanded for it. 'How am I to blame, General?' said the soldier. 'I had the choice of names, and I selected the one I now bear. If I had known one more illustrious than yours, I should have taken it.' What, really, could the gallant General be expected to say, in return for so flattering an admission?—why, merely this, that the man was equal to the occasion.

Indeed, the army affords numerous instances of

promptitude in words as well as actions, military command and discipline occasionally requiring it. It may be sufficient, however, for our present purpose, and by way of illustration, to introduce those only of a somewhat humorous character.

A young ensign residing in lodgings the rooms of which were very small, was visited by a fashionable friend, who had no sooner entered the apartment, than he exclaimed: 'Why, Harry, old boy, how long have you lived in this diminutive nutshell?' 'Well, my dear fellow,' replied the other archly, 'I am sorry to say, not quite long enough to become a kernel.' To use a military phrase, the above might be termed the 'light artillery' of conversation. Equally as good was the reply of a private of the Galloway Rifles, who was standing sentry, when an officer, noticing that he had a bruised face and an unmistakable black-eye, accosted him, and charged him at once with having been fighting. 'Please, sir,' replied the soldier, 'I believe it was principally for that, that you specially engaged me.' Dry humour such as this is seldom met with; and we are disposed to conclude that the officer, if not a rigid martinet, would decide not to pursue the inquiry further, but would treasure up the smart reply, as a joke for the camp in general, and his own private friends in particular. To us, it may recall those famous lines by Herbert:

All things are big with jest; nothing that's plain
But may be witty, if thou hast the vein.

It may not, perhaps, be generally known that our heavy troops at the battle of Waterloo had no defensive armour; but soon after, a Committee of the House of Commons sat to consider the best sort of costume necessary for heavy dragoons and such-like, when a stalwart lifeguardsman who was under examination, on being asked what armour he should like to adopt on another similar occasion, replied: 'Well, gentlemen, if you ask my candid opinion, you can have it at once. I think I should certainly prefer, if called upon to do duty again in a like manner, to put in an appearance in my shirt-sleeves!' This quite upset the gravity of the assembled conclave; and the subject remained in abeyance for some time after.

To the Army, the Church, and the Law, we are principally indebted for various whimsical examples. We have read of a celebrated man, a very popular preacher, who, a few years ago, was asked to lash the prevailing folly, the 'invisible' bonnet. He did so, as follows: 'I have been requested to rebuke the bonnets of the present day.' At this startling announcement, one might have heard a pin drop. Wandering thoughts were immediately arrested; and scanning the ladies of the congregation, he added: 'But really, I see none!'—a more bitter rebuke than any other words could possibly have conveyed.

'Tom Brown' tells us, a divine ought to adapt his sermon as an astronomer does his almanac, to the meridian of the place and people where he lives. So thought, evidently, a French priest, who had usually a very small modicum of hearers. One day while preaching at the church in his village, the doors being open, a gander and several geese came stalking and cackling up the middle aisle. The preacher, availing himself of the circumstance, observed that he could no longer

find fault with the people of his district for non-attendance; because, though they did not think proper to come themselves, they were thoughtful enough to send their representatives.

It was a saying of Lord Brougham's, that a lawyer was a learned gentleman who rescues your estate from your enemies, and keeps it himself. The following may be considered a specimen of a lawyer being equal to the occasion. A gentleman, while bathing in the sea, saw his lawyer rise up at his side, after a long dive. After an exchange of salutations had briefly passed—'By the way,' said he, 'how about Gunter? Have you taken out a warrant against him?'—'He is in quod,' replied the lawyer, and dived again, showing his heels as a parting view to his client. Nor did the latter hear more of the interview with his lawyer until he got his account, which, amongst other matters, contained the entry: 'To consultation at sea, anent the incarceration of Gunter, six and eightpence.'

On the bench, the notorious Judge Jeffreys talked fluently and with spirit; but his weakness was that he could not reprehend without scolding. His voice and visage, too, made him a terror to real offenders, and formidable indeed to all. Pointing with his cane to a man who was about being tried, he said, somewhat excitedly: 'There is a great rogue at the end of my cane!' The man to whom he pointed, looked at him, and coolly asked: 'At which end, my lord?' His lordship seemed petrified. The prisoner was equal to the occasion.

Bishop Horne used to say: 'It is expedient to have an acquaintance with those who have looked into the world; who know men, understand business, and can give you good intelligence and good advice when they are wanted.' A couple of lawyers engaged in a case were overheard discussing the issue. 'At all events we have justice on our side,' said the younger and more enthusiastic lawyer—'in this, I think, is something irresistible, and needs nothing to help it out.' To which the senior counsel replied: 'Yes, yes; that's all very well in its way, and perfectly true; but what we really want is the Chief-Justice on our side.'

Now and then will occur a play upon words or names, and in this as in everything else capable of exciting hearty laughter, there must be absurdity. Mr Justice Hayes, as is well known, was a wit. On the trial of a cause of 'Woodcock v. Bird,' before Lord Chief-Justice Jervis at Warwick, the Chief-Justice having remarked that it was a pity that two 'Birds' should not live in harmony, Hayes replied: 'Yes, it is, my lord; but my client complains of the length of the plaintiff's bill!'

There is no action in the behaviour of one individual towards another, of which human nature is more impatient than of contempt, it being a thing made up of these two ingredients—an undervaluing of a man upon a belief of his utter uselessness and inability; and a spiteful endeavour to engage the rest of the world in the same belief and slight esteem of him. It is related of a negro minstrel that, being examined as a witness, he was severely interrogated by the attorney, who wished to break down his evidence. 'You are in the negro-minstrel business, I believe?' inquired the lawyer. 'Yes,

sir.—'Is it not a rather low calling?' demanded the lawyer. 'I don't know but what it is, sir,' replied the minstrel; 'but it is so much better than my father's, that I am rather proud of it.'—'What was your father's calling?' 'He was a lawyer, sir.' The learned man asked no more questions.

It was Milton who said: 'Prudence is that virtue by which we discern what is proper to be done under the various circumstances of time and place.' Of a certainty, there are those who do not lose their presence of mind, or appear in the least way disconcerted, or even intimidated, by obstacles that occasionally crop up in the daily course of life, but remain perfectly cool and passive under the worst of mishaps. In an opera, Beard, a celebrated singer, had to look towards the side and say: 'I see him approach this way;' but unfortunately, the person expected was not forthcoming. Beard, in order to give his friend time to go round, came forward, and pulling out his watch, said: 'No; I am mistaken; it is another person; in fact, it wants one minute to the appointed time. I know he will be here; for he is ever punctual.' Not a creature detected the liberal finesse save the prompter.

Sometimes we are surprised not only to hear, but to learn something from a quarter where we should have least expected it. By the statute 6th George II. c. 37, it was made felony, without benefit of clergy, to destroy an ash-tree. Dr Ash, a great wit and intimate friend of Swift, was once wet through with the rain, and upon going into an inn where he was well known, asked the waiter to take off his coat for him; upon which the waiter started, and politely refused to do anything of the kind, for, said he, 'It is felony, sir, to strip an ash!' The Doctor used to say he would have given fifty pounds to be the author of that pun. The waiter was equal to the occasion.

PAVEMENT PORTRAITS.

A SPIDER.

A HARMLESS-looking, quiet, little gray man, carrying an innocent sort of reticule, may be observed on many a fine morning, ay, and on many a stormy one too, tripping daintily along Pall-Mall, along Cockspur Street, by Charing Cross; and then to the right, down Whitehall. Muttering to himself as he goes along, it is evident that his thoughts are introspective, and that the 'throngs of men' among whom he moves at this busy hour interest him not at all. Not by any means a remarkable man is this portrait. He is below the middle height, is dressed in respectable speckly 'Oxford mixture,' his trousers and his comfortable double-breasted overcoat being of that semi-clerical tint. He wears a tall hat, nicely brushed, with a narrow hat-band which lends a tinge of subdued melancholy to his appearance. He has spotty-gray cloth gloves of robust make on his hands, one of which carries a substantial umbrella, while the other holds the reticule alluded to. His face is rather benign, and not ill-favoured, except for his eyes, which look as if they never closed in sleep, so restless and sharp are they. His hair is like his

clothes, of an undecided gray; his whiskers of the same colour, are well trimmed, and cut so as to nearly meet under his lower lip, as if the right and left sides, hastening to greet each other in a cordial sort of way, were stopped by the little round chin, on which not a hair is allowed to grow.

Down Whitehall he walks. The carriage of the First Lord, as it drives sharply through the gateway of the Admiralty, arrests him for a moment in his progress; but the stoppage does not cause him to show any interest in the vehicle or its occupant. The blazing mounted sentries at the Horse Guards do not secure a glance from the restless eyes of the bearer of the black bag, who continues his sharp little trot until he reaches Downing Street. Here he turns the corner, and going a few yards up this quiet retreat of Diplomacy, stops, and takes his stand on the curb-stone. He plants his umbrella firmly down, and gazes in a placid way at the highly ornamented façade of the Home Office opposite.

Not a minute has elapsed after the arrival of the spider, ere the fly appears. Out from the grand doorway of a government office close at hand comes a fashionably dressed young gentleman, with a rosebud in his coat, and a slight flush on his cheeks—not exactly a flush of health, but rather a blush of perplexity and shame at the business he has in hand with the speckled smug at the corner. Turning sharp to the right, he walks, with a step rather too light and independent to be natural, straight to the sacrifice about to be made, in which he himself is to be the victim, the bag-carrier the executioner and priest.

The latter draws his chubby, white but plebeian-looking right hand from its hot cloth case, and gives four fingers to the victim, on whom he smiles complacently as he says: 'Good morning, Mr 'Ampton'—he is sparing in the use of the letter *h*—'ow are you?' As he asks this simple question with 'a smile that is pensive and child-like,' his restless little red eyes wander along the street, and across the great broad road of Whitehall to the distant Mansard roof of Montague House, as though for a moment he thinks that he has mistaken his *métier*, and that his rôle in life should have been that of an architect, instead of that of financial agent to government office fledglings, whom, to do him justice, he plucks ere even they have strong feathers for pulling.

A commonplace answer to his commonplace question having been given, the roaming eyes return home from their journey across the road, so to speak, and their owner's gaze suddenly takes a higher flight, over his companion's right shoulder in an oblique direction, as he says in a gentle nervous tone: 'Ow about those tickets for the theatre, Mr 'Ampton?'

'I've told you, Mr Jackson, a hundred times, if I've told you once, that I never have orders for the theatre. When I go, I pay, and I am not in the way of getting tickets for free admission. I

know lots of fellows *do* get them; and I am sure some such fortunate beggars must be in your book, so that it is not necessary for you to come to me for such things.—Well now, you got my letter yesterday, I see; can you do what I ask?’

The fly has come to the point with a rush. He already begins to feel rather uncomfortable, and he wants to cut the interview short, albeit he dares not look at the spider, but busies himself with arranging the flower in his button-hole, which gives the spider an opportunity to cease for a moment his study of the clouds, and allow his eyes to ‘take in’ the young man before him on their way downwards from space to the square of pavement immediately in front of his golosh-covered feet.

Then the gentle executioner draws a little diagram on the ground with the point of his umbrella, and speaking more to that Gampish article than to his interrogator, says: ‘Well, you know, Mr ‘Ampton, there’s a little interest on that last bit of paper. It isn’t much, and I daresay we can arrange it comfortable for you; and I have brought a fresh one that you can take in and sign. It’s all right. I’ve put it all together, so as not to make any confusion. I ‘ate ‘aving so many little affairs with my friends when one bit of paper can show at a glance ‘ow we stand. There now, take it, and look at it. I’m not ‘ard on anybody. You’ll be satisfied, I know.’ Here the little man puts his umbrella under his arm and opens the bag—that receptacle which holds blood in bonds, young men’s sighs, tears, and curses hidden behind the signatures hastily scrawled on the oblong slips of ominous blue paper!—and produces two of the slips, which he hands to the impatient client. ‘Ere they are, Mr ‘Ampton. That’s the old—you see I’ve entered the interest you paid me last, on the back—that you see, is for forty. Now, suppose we say I’ll let you ‘ave five, and you take up the old bit o’ paper, and sign this new one, and then we’ll be all right up to date.’

‘But this bill, my dear sir, is for fifty!’ exclaims the other, ‘and I asked you for ten. Am I to sign for other ten pounds and receive only five? Oh, this is too much! I can’t do it, I really can’t.’

‘But the interest, Mr ‘Ampton, the interest, in these ‘ard times! You’ll find it all correct, if you just go in and work it out, Mr ‘Ampton. I’ll go and take a walk on the Embankment, and I’ll come back in ten minutes, and then I know you’ll see that I’m not ‘ard upon you. I wouldn’t be ‘ard on any one for anything.’

‘Oh, well, make it seven then, and I’ll sign,’ says the victim, who makes an effort to get something nearer what he requires for the sacrifice which his signature will carry with it.

‘Five-ten.’ This in the blandest way, with a sudden look of interest in a statue stepping out of a niche in the building opposite.

‘No; six pounds ten; not a penny less—and then I’ll see whether I can get any orders for the theatre.’

‘Now, Mr ‘Ampton, Mr ‘Ampton, you are really too bad. I can’t give money away. I tell you what I’ll do—I’ll say six.’ This last offer is actually accompanied by a gentle dig administered by

the spider to the fly on the middle button of the latter’s frock coat; and a sort of little ricochet movement on the part of the former, as he looks straight at his victim for the first time.

‘All right, then; six;’ and away flies the fly to sign the new paper, which he soon brings out again; upon receiving which the financier produces a little chain purse, from which he extracts six sovereigns, already done up in paper, which he hands to the victim, saying: ‘You won’t forget the tickets, will you?’

‘Oh, all right. Good morning.’

‘Good morning, Mr ‘Ampton;’ and the sucked one goes off to his ten-to-four duties; while the sucker goes on to the Embankment to look at the penny steamers and to admire the flowers!

Nature is full of contrarities; otherwise, it would seem odd that an awful little money-grubber such as the subject of this sketch should take pleasure in the growth of trees and flowers; but so it is. This man, who, like a veritable vampire, exists on the blood of his victims, is quite an authority on roses! He has ninety-nine different kinds of this flower, which have bloomed and withered year after year in the money-lender’s garden at Wimbledon. Prizes have been gained by him at local flower-shows, where his roses have competed with those of the honest merchant and the unsophisticated local magnates; and his cleverness at rearing them is often the talk of the gardeners of the neighbourhood. Works of art too are collected by this sixty per-cent. monger; and on the walls of his vulgar little villa hang ‘bits’ by Copley Fielding, ‘old’ Chrome, and Clarkson Stanfield; while copies of the antique in statuettes stand upon his shelves. This man knows the money value of all these possessions; but we doubt whether they give him pleasure in any other way. For had he any real perception of what is beautiful and good, how could he sit among these things evening after evening, as he does, weaving the meshes in which he chains his victims, manufacturing gyves, and with his iniquitous per-cent, exactions, arranging racks as heavy and as cruel as those of Torquemada and the Inquisition of old?

The man is not pleasant; and it would be well if it were possible to shut him up for ever with his roses, his canvases, and his curiosities, so that he might cease to trot round public offices, where his presence is as deadly as the breath of typhus itself.

THE ENGLISH AVALANCHE OF 1836.

IN the year 1836, there happened a calamity which created a considerable stir throughout England. An avalanche which then occurred brought the same devastation to property and life as we are apt to consider peculiar to the lands of perpetual snow. The town of Lewes is known more or less to most travellers, and was the seat of the disaster. It is bounded by the South Downs. A part of the range is detached, and known by the name of ‘Cliffe Hills,’ the height of which is about three hundred feet above the roadway, and the row of cottages built at the base. The ascent to this line of hills is by steps cut in the chalk at the back of the

houses; while on the other end of what is known as South Street, a pit, from which the chalk had been excavated, stands, and then stood facing the whole height of the hill. Over its edge, the snow had drifted, and accumulated in an immense mass, the wind having swept it thither from the hill-top, till it overhung the cottages in the street below. In its magnitude and purity, it presented an object of interest and beauty, and attracted great attention. But as this increased in bulk—from the continued drift, rather than from fresh falls—some apprehension was expressed lest it should become detached. Those, however, who were warned of their danger, as dwelling in houses immediately beneath this vast accumulation, appeared to be most stolid in the matter! It is ever hard for the ignorant to realise a thing unknown; and when an aged man was urged to move from his fireside, he made answer that he 'had not lived eighty years to be afraid of a snowball;' while another refused to make preparation for moving 'till the thaw set in.' Those who watched the spot did so with a growing fear; and many endeavoured to rouse those most concerned, to the fact that it was no longer safe to inhabit houses so evidently imperilled. But words of warning availed little; and no advantage was taken of the offers made by those who had rooms or buildings to spare, into which household things might be stored. Thaw was the only thing known, and in many cases the only way ever heard of, in which snow was 'done away with;' so folks were willing to wait, till their experience was increased by knowledge, or till they fell victims to the fool-hardiness they displayed.

On the morning of December 27, about ten o'clock, just as the habits of daily life were being resumed in that doomed quarter, the avalanche began to move downwards, and at last burst from the hillside in one fell swoop, in its descending force driving seven cottages from their foundation, and carrying them more than twenty feet from their original standing-place. Anxious thoughts concerning the fate of the inmates filled every mind, and a crowd soon collected. Order was at once taken; and many set to work, under guidance, to clear away the snow which covered the houses, which had been removed from their sites apparently intact. A high wall on the other side of the road, behind which, some thirty feet off, the river Ouse had a back-water wharf, having been broken down, a place of refuge for the snow was thus secured. It is needless to enter into the state of confusion, the anxiety of relatives, and the strange characteristics which displayed themselves at the time. It is pleasanter to note how the emergency was met by 'master-mind' and 'ready-aid.' An ironmonger whose warnings had been unheeded, was most prompt in putting his stock of spades and shovels at the disposal of the workmen, who were soon enrolled as volunteers, under able captaincy. Those who were so employed have been heard to say, when telling the story of the memorable event, that they never could have worked if they

had not been 'obliged to mind what was said.' They were unnerved and sickened when they came to the body of a neighbour. Sometimes faint groans were heard directing their labours; and on this being known among the crowd, the anxiety of those who had missing relatives found vent in some fresh outburst. It soon became evident that the houses were completely crushed in at the back; and it was found that the sloping roofs added much to the difficulty of extricating those who were found to be pressed under the timber and debris.

The neighbouring workhouse furnished without any delay, blankets, stretchers, and whatever was needed; and thither were also removed the bodies of the dead or injured. Every assistance required was there rendered by the medical men of the town, as well as by the nurses. But eight were dug out lifeless, ere the spot could be reached from which the groans proceeded; while the gloom of grief and the tension of excitement mingled and extended among the workers, the relatives, and all who were there assembled.

The old man who had refused to take warning was the first discovered; he had been apparently suffocated, and had never moved from the chair in which he sat when he was vainly warned a short time before of the coming catastrophe. A woman had with some difficulty been persuaded to leave her house with her two children, and she then insisted on returning again 'for a shawl to wrap her baby in.' On being expostulated with, she said: 'The snow won't fall in that minute.' She re-entered her house, and was crushed beneath its ruins; but the baby that was the object of her care, was removed unhurt from her bosom. This incident, which formed a part of the detail of newspaper record, attracted the attention of a lady known in that day as a popular writer (the Hon. Mrs Norton), and she instituted inquiries as to the correctness of the statements; and finding them satisfactorily answered, she made arrangements to adopt the child whose early days were so romantically tinged.

But to return to the scene of the catastrophe, where active labours were carried on throughout the day. It had been one of the objects to ascertain how many were really missing. The evidence of neighbours had to be taken by those who acted as superintendents of the workmen; and fifteen was the number of persons found to have been in the houses at the time of the avalanche. By four P.M., when the light of the winter's day had well-nigh gone, fourteen had been extricated, and then faint groans were again heard, telling that the fifteenth was still alive. It now became necessary to reverse the order of working; for it was seen that a mass of snow still remained at the top of the hill, from which that already fallen had become detached, and that this was also threatening to come down. The snow from the broken houses had therefore to be thrown against the hillside instead of into the river, in order to break the force of that which was expected to fall. A relay of watchers was hereupon employed to take the signals given by those who were on the top of the hill, and pass the signals to the workmen who might otherwise be buried under any fresh downfall. Scarcely had the word 'Run!' been shouted, than a second mass came thundering down, enveloping some in thick snow, or

well-nigh blinding them by the rebounding particles; but happily no more serious incident occurred. Others came immediately forward; and soon the last of those buried was discovered, still alive, but much injured. He was a lad of about fourteen years old. The ruins of the cottage that had been his home had bruised him severely, and a rafter which had fallen on his leg, had broken it in two places—yet no vital part was injured. As soon as his head was uncovered, he pitifully cried for something to drink. Before he could be released from the position in which he had been buried for nearly seven hours, the rafter had to be sawn asunder; an operation that caused great anxiety, from the fear that the removal of the timber might cause a heavier portion to press on his chest, and deprive him of that life to which he seemed about to be restored. At last, in a state of extreme exhaustion, he was released, and taken to the workhouse. One little child, beside that already mentioned, escaped uninjured. Five had fractured limbs or severe bruises. Eight were killed, and those were buried in the churchyard of South Malling, an outlying parish of the town of Lewes, where a marble tablet in the church thus records the event:

This Tablet is placed by Subscription, to record an Awful Instance of the Uncertainty of Human Life. On the Morning of December 27, 1836, the poor houses of this Parish were destroyed by a Mass of Snow falling from the Hill above, and the following eight Individuals were buried beneath the Ruins: William Geer, aged 82; Phoebe Barn-dur, 45; Mary Taylor, 42; Susan Hayward, 34; M. A. Budgeman, 28; Jane Boaks, 25; Joseph Wood, 15; Mary Budgeman, 11. Their Remains are interred on the north side of this Church. 'Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.'—Luke xii. 40.

The funeral, no less than the catastrophe that caused the deaths, is still riveted in the memories of the older dwellers in the neighbourhood. As the snow still continued to obstruct the roads, a deep cutting was made for the wagons which took the usual place of hearse in melancholy cortège. Sorrowful as the circumstance appeared to all, thankfulness from the first was expressed that 'the fall' was not in the night; for though the danger had been pointed out to the inmates of the ill-fated cottages, above forty persons had slept in them; and marvellous escapes were recorded of those who were away at the time. One woman often has told how she was called from her 'washing-up' to see how beautiful the snow was on the top of the hill; but after walking across the road, she had not time to turn round and look up, for she was pushed forward by the falling mass. Thus narrowly did she escape the fate of kinsfolk and friends.

Voluntary contributions of nearly four hundred pounds quickly placed a fund in the hands of 'Directors,' which enabled them to grant assistance to the families of the sufferers, and to carry on the exploration of the ruins. The clearing away of the debris revealed the fact, that among some of the residents an attempt had been made to keep Christmas as a festive season. Pieces of cake, pudding, and other eatables were scattered among earthenware, apparel, bricks, and broken

timber. Nearly all the furniture was damaged. This was collected, and placed in an empty house, where owners were invited to see if they could identify their own possessions. Many articles, spliced and repaired, remain valued as relics, and serve to recall the sensational episodes that occurred at the time of the great English Avalanche of 1836.

S N O W.

WRAPPED in a dead, deep silence lie the moors,
Beneath their shroud of white. Unbroken calm
Reigns o'er the wide expanse, whose deadness seems
The very grave of life!

The leaden sky
Teems with its snowy burden; 'mid the furze,
With this fair, pure, white penthouse overhead,
Crouch the packed moor-fowl and the shivering hare,
In that instinctive fellowship which comes
Of common hardship—each intent to find
Some scanty fragment for a needful meal.

Here, with knit brows, courageously, along
The scarce-distinguished path, the shepherd plods,
Now glancing upwards at the threatening sky,
Now scanning, for some wanderer from his flock,
The landscape round; and ever and anon,
To keep his spirits up, he whistles loud
Some tune discordant, as he picks his way.

And see! Upon the sombre forest-lands,
The tall, gaunt trees stand forth like sentinels
Around a slumbering camp; their meagre arms,
Swayed by the wind, the gathered snow-flakes shower
In powdery softness down.

The lowlands lie
Hidden beneath their snow-dress; scarce a fox
Or rabbit is astir; the famished birds
Nestle within the ivy that enshrouds
The farmhouse walls; the cattle all are stalled
Warm in the byre; and in the straw-yard crowd
Together the plough-horses.

Snow, snow, snow,
On moor and wold, on woodland, and in glade,
On city-roof, on country-cottage thatch,
Winter's 'regalia,' crisp, bright, sparkling Snow!

A. H. B.

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1st. All communications should be addressed to the Editor, 339 High Street, Edinburgh.

2d. To insure return in case of ineligibility, postage-stamps should accompany every manuscript.

3d. MANUSCRIPTS should bear the author's full Christian name, surname, and address, legibly written; and should be written on white (not blue) paper, and on one side of the leaf only.

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